the register



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Sunny Anna Tran DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH

The Other Worlds

There is something immensely enthralling about the concept of the universe. At least, that is my reply to the cliche of, Penny for your thoughts?

"That has to be worth a dollar," he complains, furrowing his eyebrows as he always does. I've warned him time and time again to watch his expressions, because someday, he will be left with a unique blend of constipation and anxiety. To which the rebuttal is always, Hey BOTOX isn't just for women, you know.

"Pay up," I declare, and stubbornly hold out my hand for the invisible dollar.

"So," he says loudly, unwilling to part with even a single stick of chewing gum, let alone a crisp (ripped) paper bill (a penny, two nickels, and a five-pound note with the head of Elizabeth Fry). "What's so interesting about it? I mean, besides the obvious," he adds in response to the emanating incredulity.

"What do you know about quantum physics?" He's annoyed, I can tell; whenever a question is answered by a question the old man's wrinkles define.

"Isn't it about the behavior of matter in the atomic and subatomic?"

"Oh, please, spare me your Wikipedia definition. You stole that right off the webpage, didn't you?" I accuse. He raises his right hand and straightens in the slate-blue bus eat (Picasso blue, he says, for the artist).

"Guilty as charged," he confesses somberly. "Do I have to go to jail now?"

"No." I start to laugh, then stop before he decides to poke fun at my giggles. "I actually found my definition on Wikipedia, as well." He smirks, and grabs my hand to raise it in the air. "I read other articles, too!" I protest, and snatch it back; I'm stuffing both hands in my baby-blue blazer before I remember that I have no pockets other than a fraying hole near the hem. "I didn't really understand most of the concepts, though they were interesting."

"Okay, go on."

"Well, you know about quarks and stuff, right? Like, what a proton is made up of?" He gives me a blank look, but he's faking it, I can tell. "It's been discovered—I think—that the subatomic particles like quarks exist in wave function, where everything exists at once."

"...Okay, you lost me there."

"So there's this person halfway across the world—"

"China."

"What?"

"There's a person halfway across the world, they're in China." He motions slightly with his hand. "Go on."

"Uh...okay, so there's a person in China," I continue slightly nervously. "You don't know what that person is doing. Is he at school, playing basketball, on the bus, you don't know. Everything is possible, and because you don't know where the person is for certain, we can say that he is everywhere, and so, everything exists."

"Interesting..." he strokes an imaginary beard and stops when he sees I'm not laughing. "So this can be applied to the theory of the big bang. Or rather, what was before the big bang. Let's say that what the universe was before the big bang had a wave function. So everything that is possible exists at the same time, you following me?" A nod. "There are two interpretations surrounding the wave function of the big bang: the Copenhagen and the many-worlds. What religion are you?"

"I'm an atheist, same as you..." he responds carefully. "Didn't you know that already?" "So in that case, you'll probably prefer the many-worlds interpretation." I ignore his question, because we both already know the answer. "What the many-worlds interpretation suggests is that everything still exists at the same time. Basically, there are many worlds, or universes. So, while we're taking a bus, in another universe, we could be walking, or teleporting, or jumping around and playing hopscotch."

In another universe, we are different. He loves me/hates me/despises me/could kill me. I am ignorant/deceitful/sly/bouyant/invisible. We are friends/enemies/strangers in disguise. He is the childhood friend impossible to have/a pen pal split by a mile and a sea/ the space between my fingers/the lock and key to my soul. He is every cheesy/pathetic/plagiarized/love/hate/hope song and quote out there in the world.

"So what happens if we're not playing hopscotch?" he asks gently. This is his way of drawing me out from my thoughts; a process he has become used to over the days of meeting a blank and glazed stare.

"Oh." This is my replacement for the unspoken word, Sorry. "Then you believe in the

Copenhagen interpretation. That's just saying you believe in God. See, the wave function can collapse if there is an observer—if we actually look for that person in China, then all the possibilities collapse and we're left with one. This, again, applies to the big bang. If there was somebody who observed the big bang, say, God, then we would be left with one universe. This one."

"You're right," he admits, cocking an eyebrow. It's a feat he must have practiced over the years. "This universe stuff is actually interesting."

"Told you so," I crow with a smirk. "So what do you believe in?"

"Oh—my stop," he says, and we both stand because he is near the window. "I'll tell you tomorrow," he promises, grabbing onto a flimsy loop of dangling plastic. "And you?" The bus swerves toward the curb and stops abruptly, sending a few standing daydreamers stumbling to the front.

"I'll tell you tomorrow," I repeat, and laugh at the annoyance he exhibits, shaking his head slightly while stepping off the bus. I sit back down (in the same seat, because there are only a handful of people left on the bus) and close my eyes, and I wait for the rumble of disembodied voices to lull me to sleep.

Instead, my thoughts wander back to quantum physics and the universe. I think about what he said before—I'm an atheist, same as you. We discussed religion once before. We were trapped in the bus-filled snow, stuck in a heaving mass of I have somewhere be! and We've been waiting here for-e-ver! We switched sides more than once—he argued Buddhism and Hinduism, while I snuck over to Islam for a bit. Surprisingly, neither one of us had made a move to approach Christianity.

In the end, leaving the dwindling number of passengers on the stationary bus, we walked our way home with the conclusion that, in most religions, we would be considered two walking boatloads of sin—lying isn't very much appreciated in most cases. It was only when our teeth were click-clattering and we were handing off a pair of mangled woolen gloves every other minute that he announced: God leaves matters unfinished. He's a quitter.

Now, I ponder the idea of God creating the universe as the Copenhagen interpretation says. Though spoken nearly a month ago, his words ring in my ears: He's a quitter. All God had to spare was one look, and that was it. Nothing more, nothing less. But God did spare that look, and in doing so, he chose one universe to exist. He chose to make him and me, us, and in a way, be the only ones of ourselves.

And that's when I realize. God is not a quitter. He starts things, creates them, and makes them special. He makes them unique.

My phone beeps twice—text message. I force myself to open my eyes, and blearily register that he was the one who sent the text. I flip open my phone, and smile to myself.

It is the answer I thought he would have.

-Quianquian Zhao, IV



Untitled
Nicole Smith, III

what a poem should be

A poem should be new, New as "spring" is not. It should be incandescent and alive, Spinning and mad as a Hatter. It should be chalkboard dreams And teacup wishes With tears that salt your Earl Gray. It should be an umbrella smile With glittering jump rope arms. It should be groaning with delicious, sibilant words Like decadence, luxurious, luscious. It should roll and tumble Like a silvery-moon-pulled tide, Foam whispering, breathing, breaking Along a pebbled beach of words.

-Lian Parsons, IV



Cat Miles Grover, I WATERCOLOUR

I've dragged a ragged tablecloth behind me, Scraped, wrinkled, and stained in the corners For years. It felt like warmth to me, in the biting wind of the biting reality of mortality. I've dragged a blood-red cape behind me, Made of thrown-out scraps of cloth and child For years. It felt like artificial strength to me, around me of bone and ligament and tendons, stretched towards the sky in preparation for

Scraped, wrinkled, and stained in the corners,

It felt like warmth to me, in the biting wind of old age—

Made of thrown-out scraps of cloth and children's dreams,

It felt like artificial strength to me, around my arms stretched towards the sky in preparation for flight.

I've dragged a frail kite string behind me, Running and running and running, For years. It felt like purpose to me, direction, 'nowhere but up' in a sky of tree branches and heavy raindrops.

I've dragged you around behind me, My only friend, For years. You felt like guidance to me, But we can't hold hands for much longer. I've got to grow my own calluses.

These memories crowd around me like the clouded corners of a faded photograph. But it is my turn to hold the camera.

I've dragged you around behind me, For far too long, for long too far, For years. You felt like security to me, covering me with warmth in the stitches, for which I must say:

Thank you, and goodbye.

–Andy Vo, I



Sitting by the Water Ella Mahony, I SILVER GELATIN PRINT

paradox

There is an interesting paradox,
which states
that under any circumstance,
any time,
any place,
you may cut up anything,
rearrange it,
and make anything else.

Mathematicians have proved it true by staring into the hole that is the dead center of mathematics.

It is true, of course.

Have you never seen
a magician
pull a rabbit out of nothingness? (Or rather,
he cut up air
and turned it into a rabbit.)
Or heard of a prophet who turned
water into wine
and stone into bread?

How do you think germs multiply?

They simply cut themselves up
and put the pieces together
to make two germs
of equal size and weight.

This property is also found in worms and jellyfish. Some starfish, too. And yet some things are still inconceivable. How can you chop up an apple and use the remains to build a planet?

Science says: it is not possible.

Math says: it is possible.

Science says: how?

Math says: I don't know, but look, I just proved that it is possible,
and your physics mean nothing to permutations and groups.

Math says to Science: You base your laws on what usually happens. You cannot explain the forces of gravity or magnetism. You just know that they usually apply. And so, you say it is a law.

But my numbers are true.
They do not lie to me.
I do not need to guess the value of pi,
because there is one,
and I know it is infinite
also thanks to my numbers

and if my numbers tell me that you are lying, I will listen to them, trusted facts, over you, wishful guesser.

I say of Math and Science: if math is telling the truth, it's up to me to be his voice.

—Jack O'Halloran, V



Leaves of Hope Justine Wang, V

Vulnerable Beetle Deadly Sparrow Beetle crawls,

silent. unnoticed by those who are not there to him. He wants, needs the cover of grass.

Sparrow lands his huge body, indifferent to beetle's needs and caring only for his own. He needs food, and chooses beetle.

Boy watches. And is uncertain. Of whose side to take. Or if there are sides. At all.

—Jack O'Halloran, V



Fields of Flanders Kristen Louie, I WATERCOLOUR

highway dreaming

They're living on cheap ramen and hopeless dreams. He wants to be a world-famous brain surgeon and she wants to be more things than she can count on one hand. Sometimes they fight about when she leaves her lipstick in the sink or when he doesn't pick up orange juice at the grocery store. But they're happy, even with the cracked paint and terrible plumbing. Every morning at 7:08 he catches the 7:15 train to the university and she takes their battered old Sedan to her job at the highway tolls. She likes to make up stories about the more interesting cars to tell him later. The bedside lamp is on and her voice humming low in her throat; he drifts quietly in and out of her highway dreams.

When she gets a cold, he stays home and makes soup and watches re-runs of Seinfeld with her. He rubs her feet and kisses her shoulder before covering her with her favorite comforter. He tiptoes away and lets her doze until he comes back with more Advil and tissues. He climbs into bed with her and evens out his breathing to match hers. She hides the newspaper with the poems scribbled in the margins under her blanket and goes back to sleep.

He tells her he has to perform his first surgery soon. He's nervous, she can tell; he's stubble-cheeked and shadow-eyed and he doesn't seem to remember how to use his thumbs. Even though the operation is a minor one, he says being responsible for part of another person's life is a very scary thing. So she sits next to him on the worn sofa in her socked feet and lets him be scared.

When he comes home from the hospital, he looks impossibly tired. She hears him come in and slides the last sheet of notebook paper in the trash. As she stands on her tiptoes to wrap her arms around him, she can feel him breathe for the first time in what must have been hours. She asks him how it went and he grins deliriously into her hair.

I did it, he told her. I really did it.

Of course you did, she says back.

She doesn't tell him about the rejection slip from the magazine she sent her poem to.

The next surgery he has to accomplish makes him even more skittish than last time. His hands flutter like trapped butterflies. She gently plies him with goldfish and PB&J, which he usually says make him feel like Saturday mornings and footed pajamas. But he doesn't touch it and she eats it silently in the kitchen, waiting to hear the door close. She almost misses the careful brush of his hand on her arm until she turns. He is two parts apology and three parts not-even-there, so she just lets him go.

Again, he doesn't breathe throughout the entire surgery. But he finally does when they're home and she takes his hand. Her fingers are ink-smudged and she reminds herself to take out the recycling before he sees the crumpled scraps of her dreams.

How'd it go? she wants to know.

Good, is his answer. Terrifying, but good.

Of course it was, she says warmly.

She doesn't tell him about her fifth rejection slip.

The last few dozen operations he's performed earned him a promotion and a raise. They start planning to move to a bigger house. She smiles and laughs and talks along with his exaltations and pretends that it's okay that he knows nothing about her and all the stacks of unpublished poems.

How are you? he asks. How's everything going in the middle of the highway? She shrugs. Boring, as usual, she reminds him.

They move to a house with green shutters and a yellow door. She finds a different job as a columnist and it feels so good to see her name in print, even if it's not what she really wants to be doing. He reads the paper while she burns the toast. His white coat he wears on workdays is a crisp blankness. It reminds her of all the times she's sat at her desk, listening to him whistling off-key, as she stares at her computer screen, the cursor blinking at her mockingly.

What happens next? she asks one day.

What do you mean? he says, looking up from his coffee.

I mean, she struggles, are we always- she bites off the rest of the sentence.

What, darling? he coaxes gently. What is it?

She turns away, shoulders lowering in defeat.

I don't know anymore.

—Lian Parsons, IV



Street Corner

Zoe Swartz, I WATERCOLOUR, MICRON PEN

oken arean

I watched my dream walk down the alley of solitude.

I saw my dream wearing raggedy, torn-up clothes.

I witnessed my dream digging through the trash looking for a scrap of inspiration.

I was so embarrassed at how my dream could lean on the corner of desperation

and actually beg for hope.

It was pathetic and juvenile to me.

One day I went up to my dream.

It was sitting on the bench of regret watching birds pecking for crumbs of joy.

I sat next to my dream and we just watched the birds for hours.

Finally I got the nerve to ask my dream

"So.. how are you?"

Barely looking at me, my dream replied

"I've been better.."

I didn't know how to respond, so we were arrested by this awkward silence.

After a couple of minutes, the birds flew away. I looked at my dream; my dream looked at me, and the birds were almost out of sight. But we kept staring down the secrets of the streets from our past. The intensity grew, and the birds were long gone.

As the sun was finally setting, I advised my dream, "You should have flown with the birds." But my dream replied, "No, you should have held on to me."

— Lisa Boyd, II

The Vienn

It is the sweet tweak of her voice that startles my eyes up from this page, the self-conscious flow of my pen that stops me from dismantling my position entirely instead leading me only to turn subtly towards her, to watch as she slips down the sidewalk tapping her feet, stumbling.

She walks with more than one rhythm at a time I note,

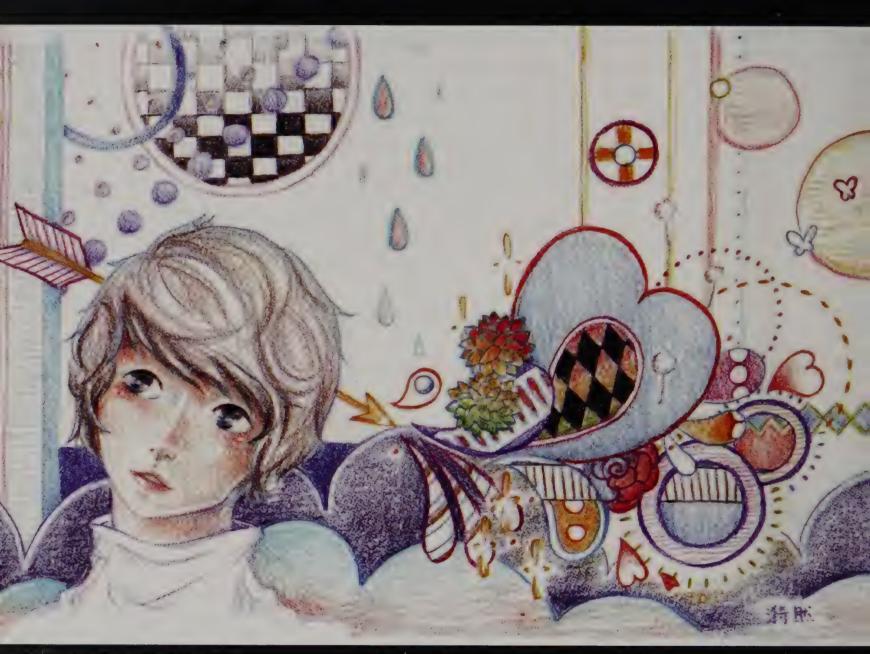
that she is happy

and I am deathly curious as to how in the world she got there, became as she is—

A cataract of energy upsetting the slump of my calm A glow of intrigue luring the crane of my neck to its furthest angle.

It is only when she has long flown around the corner that I see no choice but to return to my comparatively blank page, my pasty dead end.

—Maya Nojechowicz, I



Star Crossed Yiran Buckley, III COLORED PENCIL

come le onde

But oh! she cries, I could never love again!

2

From eager blues to declining grays, her dresses fade. He won't say and she won't hear

imprecision of words oh so palpable.

Where is he? Where is he to hold her in her nation of modest and quiet and falling greens, like leaves.

4

All and ignored, his poetry ripples through her. An intentless talent much to be admired.

Wounded now, cannot so tender, cannot feel or laugh What a woman!

6

And as the waves on rocks, she breaks herself against him.

— Alec MacNeil, III

entropy

I fall asleep on the train often these days—more so than most. Lately, it's become something of a daily ritual. It's never really planned for, or initiated, it's just something about the shag carpet seating, the capricious rocking, the pleasant smell of human filth and body odor, that induces extreme lethargy in me.

Despite my regular naps upon the tram, I never seem to stray afar from my location. Instinctively, as if a Darwinian response against tardiness and moderate disorientation I awaken from my slumber at the most opportune moment.

It's a cosmic curiosity that I often wake up from my doses sitting next to completely different people than those I initiated my journey with. The cute 17 year old with a dimple on her left cheek, the one whose hair smelled of jasmine and ginger, is now ravished with age. Her hair flecked with grey and her cheeks, once fleshed with youth, now hanging pensively.

At times you encounter the bonafate stranger. Some soul you swear you've never seen before but with whom you hit it off instantly. Topics of discussion usually include the book he or she cradles in their hands, the same book you fell asleep reading. Or perhaps his or her shirt, endorsing the band they love, the same shirt she got from the concert, the same concert you were at, sitting only two seats away, never engaging in conversation, until now.

At times the meetings are not so fortuitous. Perhaps you're rudely awakened by some mindless Neanderthal, blasting their music so loud you wonder why their head has yet to implode, and wait—anxiously—in hopes that it does. Or by a group of 'preteens' or teenagers (*underclassmen*) who despite their claims at maturity find it increasingly difficult to avoid acting like chimps in a public setting.

There are stranger awakenings still; the aged self-righteous Haitian lady, who, despite her good intentions, performs the ungodly act of rousing you from your sleep with some rather unintelligible ramblings on how the year 2009, or 2010, or now 2011 is your year for redemption. Evangelism is fine, when done in a timely manner (ex, not 6 a.m. in the morning).

This is not all. You may suddenly come to the realization that some bees have decided to make a nest in the overhead bus lights. An angry bird may have found its way into your particular train cart. Some crack addict may have decided he wants to be your best "frann," or the homeless man who hasn't seen clean soap or water in days may decide to sit right next to you (yes—there is such a thing as dirty soap—don't ask). Maybe, if it's a really good day, some sexually ambiguous creature seated next to you will remark on how cute you look in your sleep.

Awkward? Much.

Some uncomfortable situations however, are brought on by yourself—slowly leaning onto the nearby stranger, who, frankly, just doesn't want to know you that intimately. Maybe drooling absent-mindedly, saliva coating the collar of your shirt, unbeknownst to you, that the girl of your dreams is watching you—in disgust.

Sometimes, it's the things you say. Screaming "mummy help me!" may seem like a good idea when Chucky, the deranged demon doll, is chasing you in your dreams—but in real life—it translates to instant embarrassment. Worse yet are instances of bed—or rather tram—wetting, for those who have not yet mastered control of their bladders. (There is such a thing as adult diapers). Perhaps if you're really lucky, you'll have one of those fancy epileptic seizures in your sleep, the ones where your body moves to and fro on its own accord—to the amusement of everyone on your train cart (and everyone on YouTube as well, courtesy of your best friend with the camera phone). Thanks!

Even when passive, quiescent, sleeping—as the tram marks its merry way, you are still affected. There's simply no way to disengage yourself from the tangle of so many lives intertwined in one moving box. There is no escape. The laws of the universe dictate entropy and just as 'all that is' leans towards chaos—so do you. Frankly, there is too much that can occur in a matter of stops.

—Emmanuel Oppong-Yeboah, I



bird's eye view

see it.

look out the window, lean over my lap little one and peer out. see the world's perfect circles and straight lines. it always continues. when you look at that, see it. tiny worlds. tiny lives with tiny joys and tiny problems. and when you see it, doesn't it seem foolish, one tiny light went out, it flickered like a seedy bar's neon signs seducing visitors into its caverns wagging a beckoning finger and making impossible promises. a flicker, and you winced. see it again.

so many lights are unbroken, but the sky's promises don't hold on winter soil. on the ground it's bitterly cold, they're still breathing air having shed their coats, I notice in passing their naked frames. I want to cover the trees with warm blankets, exposed to bear the burden and hold snow on their long extending arms. I trace my fingers delicately along the life lines of the bark, innocence carved its initials here once.

see it?

—Leisa Loan, I

observation

In the tabloids, they are effortlessly painted as ideal.

Models, they are called, as in

Model figure

Model phrase

Model life

There is the buxom blonde beauty

With an air of innocence--

the Psyche to what may be a hideous monster.

There is the lacquer-smooth Ebony

Said to shine as brightly as the stars themselves,

however ironic that may be.

There is the ruddy flame of intent and regret

Causing men to swoon with the heat

of their spite.

There are the words, unspoken and not:

"Don't mind us.

Yes, it is true what others say--

You don't have to be us

To be gorgeous.

But it is true what others say--

We are normal,

everyday women."

A normal, everyday woman

who does not have to be them to be

Gorgeous

might be expected to be them as

A normal, everyday woman.

instead, she is two mounds of bulging flesh on a chest Made of cracked yellow Play-Doh, Dried and watered in an attempt to revive. Hips that will not fit Through the narrow passage of two tables squeezed to pop. Hair dyed blue one too many times; Washed once more than that. Premature wrinkles from squinting too long at Unfamiliar words and a C+ that never seemed to make sense. Hidden within the nest of tangled blue-blonde hair is the theory that According to them, she may not be a woman at all.

—Quianquian Zhao, IV

the table

I sat on the other side of the table. You were physically present, but you weren't there; your eyes were empty and your voice was flat. We were sitting in the McDonald's by the park; we didn't order anything, we never did. It was a mid-January day, the joy from Christmas had worn off and now it was just cold.

"Do you remember when we came here for my birthday?" I asked. "We brought a cake and everything and didn't buy a thing from the menu, they didn't even care."

You had a ghost of a smile on your face as you managed to force out a "yeah..."

I looked outside to the pitch-black night and suggested that we go home. We stepped outside and were immediately slapped in the face by the cold wind. I pulled my scarf closer while you looked at your feet and shuffled along.

"I always liked the city at night, it's so much more alive, it's like the people are the city's heartbeat and as long as we're here then the heart keeps on beating."

You struggled to provide a weak smile, but it quickly disappeared. Sometimes I felt like I was talking to a wall.

I started to wonder how this happened; you used to have a glow in your eyes and bright smile on your face, but as I looked at you now, you looked as if you hadn't smiled in your life.

We sat in the bus shelter in silence. When the bus finally pulled up, you followed me onto the bus and sat down next to me.

"I never liked riding buses in the dark, they're like little glowing pods swallowing people up and then spitting them back out."

You didn't even acknowledge that I had said anything; you just looked out the window into the dark. I worried about you, a lot, but I was never really good with talking about things that needed to be said.

The bus came to my stop, but I couldn't bring myself to get off. I didn't know why, but I just knew that I couldn't.

"I think I'll ride to your stop and then go home, I don't feel like going home right now," I said more to myself than anyone else.

We continued to ride in silence; I tried to think up things to say to you, but kept coming up blank. We got off the bus and walked to your house, passing the school where we used to go, passing the river that we fell in that one time, passing the store where we used to buy M&M's every day after school. I wanted to remind you about these memories, to see if you would smile at least a little, but I knew in my heart that you wouldn't even respond, so I stayed silent.

We arrived at your front porch and you unlocked the door to go inside, you sort of turned back to look at me as if you wanted to say something, you stayed silent, but I saw it. I saw the feeling I knew far too well escape from your eyes, I saw the hurt I felt far too often, I saw the plea I had given far too many times. And I knew that I couldn't leave.

"I'll understand more than you think."

You opened the door a bit wider and I followed you into your house and sat across from you at the kitchen table.

—Elie Montgomery, III



Irish Heart Caytie Campbell-Orrock, I DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPH

dear. lois

if i could let you into my networks, untangle the wires that bind my tangents, collect the steam that runs my trains of thought, be sure the green that runs my life were eradicated, i would.

if i could turn back time, breathe just like you, with securities suburban, of white pickets and teeth; see just like you, with eyes unflinchingly outward towards challenge and disarray; be just like you, with heart of weakness, i would.

if i could let myself be anything less—

i told you, i said, "I don't want to be hurt," i said. and you told me "I know." "I know."

dear lois, if i could be anything i were not, i would.

but i thank you for loving me just the same.

—Andy Vo, I



It is raining outside again Each drop is like a Christmas ornament Ready to crash down from the highest peak to the base of the tree ready to shatter into millions of pieces

I stand at the center of the road, A car's horn is heard nearby But I don't care, I stand and wait I wait and drink, I drink and dream Each drop is spicy like chili peppers

The burning sensation continues The light turns green and more car horns Can be heard in the back of my mind I stand still at the center of the road I look out at the identical faces

It is sad how naïve they all are I wave to a man swearing at me And turns my head back towards the sky And I don't care, I stand and wait, I wait and drink, I drink and dream

It is raining outside again Each drop of rain is like a drop of acid burning away my face and name my mouth is open as it continues to rain but I don't care, I drink and dream

—Jenny Pham, III

a lover's tyranny

And into the seas that I have wept, the raucous tides within I've kept, deep beneath the tossing spray, nestled inside, a conscious at bay. And oxygen becomes a filthy wife, burning the throat with remnants of strife; down the bodies drown in graceful pirouettes, fixed empty at a sky - starless, ebony silhouettes. And join the dead figurines sleeping in the waves, chaining themselves to me, the faithful slaves; parting my lips, I close their lidded eyes -I memorized so well who it is they despise. And I tear their faces from memories long past, anchoring them to my chest, warmed by the mass; to stack the corpses with with merciless glee, the beginnings of an empire beneath the sea.

—Patricia Wise, III



Shing 02 Dominick Zheng, II

myname

They say what's in a name?

I say nothing for my name does not define me.

You see I am so much more than this title they have given me.

So much more than this empty word they have told me I would be labeled with for life.

Honestly my name means nothing to me for I am so much more.

My name does not speak for me.

It does not know my pain or struggle.

It does not tell of my ambition or dreams or lack of self esteem.

It does not know my apparent talent with these words that just seem to flow like a river from my

mouth gushing out rapid thoughts and streaming emotions.

It does not know the words I speak in rhythmic beats and my beating heart that makes my poetry street.

It does not know about the hands that crafted these words forming syllables and verbs that seem to curve and swerve like my thoughts.

It does not know about my soul and how I feel like my life is out of control and when I reach out to somebody I have no hand to hold, only a pen that becomes a sword that spills my black blood onto these pages so then can feel my rage.

And feel this fire in my soul that burns in my brains and these addictive words that flow like a drug to my vein, and hoping when I say this it wont be in vain because this is my pain.

My name does not know that I am mental, so these words I say are insane and sometimes I can't refrain from saying what's on my mind.

So I spill my thoughts into these lines and these rhymes trigger thoughts like a gun to my head, but these keep me alive instead of leaving me for dead.

My name does not know that my words seem to fall from my mouth like rain from sky and hit the pavement and slips from the drain to the gutter, and I was born from the womb of an incredible mother who knew that I would be much more than my name.

You see my name does not know that I am called by another title called black and because of that people would try to hinder my dreams.

That because of this other label that my name and who I am would not always be considered, because of my dark skin tone and by the way these words are intoned you can tell that I

do not condone these facts.

My name does not know that I am untamed and I was the bird that spread its wings because I refused to be caged by ignorance.

My name does not know that at one time because of my intelligence they told me I was not black, and I look back and I thought that I ought to have slapped the BLACK off of them.

And you look at me and you see this diverse boy that can converse like a man and now you understand why my name is not who I am.

—Justin Singletary, II



Remington Standard No. 7 Reed McConnell, I



Untitled
Maya Nojechowicz, I
SILVER GELATIN PRINT

Swan Lake

You looked stunning out there with your white furls strewn about you like a magicians cloak, each step placed perfectly, and pirouetting with ease. So flawless in fact, that I saw that swan craning his neck to a near impossible angle, as your legs seemed to prance about beneath him

and watching you there, with all your fluidity and precision, your lines so smooth and satin settling slowly slowly as you rose and fell;

Reminded me,—of how much I hate math, the impracticality of fixed meaning.

Me. I'd rather rock out to oldies, drunk on sleep and in my best pair of superman boxer briefs, wailing,—Oh Cupid, Cupid, please hear my cry!

-Emmanuel Oppong-Yeboah, I



Lantern and Grapes
Reed McConnell, I
WATERCOLOUR

what does this make us?

These days, it seems like everybody knows You. On the radio, I can hear effeminate guys singing songs about how You loved them, how You left them, and just about everything in between. Everywhere, I hear couples whispering about how much they love You. Everyone's fallen in love with You at some point or another; everyone's broken up with You. You're on the tip of every tongue, everyone has a confession for You.

We're sitting on a bench in the middle of the Common, the summer sun is just starting to crawl downward and our shadows are stretching into movie monsters behind us. I'm breathing quickly, excitement and nerves are slithering along my limbs and I've got to tense up and smile to make it look like it's natural. You're looking at me and I'm looking at you, and the romance novels I skimmed in the bookstore we stopped at said that now was a romantic moment when we were staring into each other's eyes. I can't see in much, but your eyes aren't the deep, soulful pits that I'd been promised. I don't sense an instant connection between us, our souls don't join in harmony, there's no moment of perfect understanding, but I figure it's now or never so I lean towards you and you lean towards me and somewhere in the middle our lips collide and just sort of stay there and you pull away because you're a nice girl, and a nice girl doesn't kiss that way the first time, and certainly not in public with those college guys playing ultimate Frisbee and smoking their little roaches just fifty feet away, but I don't know that and I panic because I lied and told you this wasn't my first time and there were other girls before this and I just know I managed to screw it up somehow.

We'd been 'dating' for a month and it was our first kiss. Not as sad as one might think, because you live in Connecticut and I live in Boston and we're both 14 and our only contact has been at a Quaker retreat where you told me how much you liked me and I realized that you were pretty damn good looking and you made me ask you out because you're a nice girl and nice girls don't ask guys out. So then you go home and I go home and we talk on the phone for hours and hours and you love me and I love you and that's what a couple does. And I lie to you and say that I'd dated other girls and I'd kissed other girls so that way you won't think I'm just some loser who can't get anyone to like him. So one night, while we're appreciating the unlimited call rates that phone companies give land lines because everybody's talking on their cell phone anyways so it doesn't make much difference, and you tell me that you'll be coming up to Boston and we'll have a great time and I go into conniptions because I've got to plan out the perfect day for us.

So this weekend rolls up and I'm standing on the front porch of our house with the white plastic siding that looks like wood that's been whitewashed and I'm wearing a dark grey T-Shirt because you told me to because it reminds you of a Taylor Swift song. You love Taylor Swift. I don't mind her, I say, she has some pretty good songs. And your mother's car rolls down our lovely little dead-end street in the middle of a child-friendly suburban neighborhood and my heart drops into my stomach and splashes all my insides with the acid of fear because there you are getting out of your car and you're wearing this almost shiny silklooking white dress with red trimming and your long dyed-dark hair cascading down your shoulders because that's how all the novels describe hair, like water, cascading, flowing. So you're there looking just like a wet dream and I've got to hurry to rearrange myself and make it inconspicuous because you're a nice girl and I'm a nice guy and nice guys have more self control than that.

Now your mom is driving us into town for our perfect day and I'm holding your hand and I just know that it's clammy and sweaty and nothing like the way a nice guy's hand should feel and you look at me and give me the most amazing, glowing smile that warms me to the bottom of my heart and fills my head with fear because I can see all the incriminations lying just behind your eyes. 'You're not being sweet enough' 'You're too quiet' 'You're too nervous' A list of problems I have no idea how to fix building up on tickertape rolls across my conscience, so I do my best to do better, I dote over you what I hope is enough, I kick myself as we walk out of each store because I didn't find you a wonderful gift with its wonderful significance shown in three digits on its price tag. Then your mom finds herself something that she has to run and do and it's just you and I and some stoned college guys and their Frisbee, the epitome of cool, the definition of chill, measured against me, making me ever more the awkward nerd, the trembling kid on his first date, staring into the eyes of the girl who loves him he loves her too and not knowing what to do and I hate them for being everything I'm not, I hate her for being too good for me, I hate me for not being good enough for her.

—Owen Stuts, IV



Works in Progress
Ashley Hernandez, II
WATERCOLOR, MICRON PEN

Cream Puff

My heart is smiling today.

There are little picket-flowers climbing the walls of the church and the walls of the earth beneath our feet. Cars simmer by.

We are eating little clouds of cream and feather-bread that taste like milk and it's all over my hair and your mouth and my fingers and your chin. I am not dainty when I eat.

You say, Saving some for later? laughing, and you take my little heart into your hands and find it's smiling.

- Adriana Lasso-Harrier, I



